



YoungStar

Frequently Asked Questions: Learning Environment and Curriculum

February 5, 2016

Note: Almost all questions have been revised since June 10, 2013; questions that have been substantially revised or added since the last update are highlighted.

YoungStar is a 5 Star quality rating and improvement system that supports child care and school-age care providers in the areas of education, learning environment & curriculum, business & professional practices and the health & well-being of children. Through this rating system the state addresses several key issues in Wisconsin's child care system. YoungStar:

- Focuses on improving outcomes for children by improving the overall quality of care
- Creates multiple pathways to professional development opportunities and better quality for child care and school-age programs
- Creates a clear, understandable tool for parents to choose quality child care
- Creates incentives and provides support for programs to improve services, particularly for low-income children
- Improves accountability for the Wisconsin Shares system

Questions on YoungStar Learning Environment and Curriculum

(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)

YoungStar Evaluation Criteria: Learning Environment and Curriculum

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Answers about YoungStar Evaluation Criteria: Learning Environment & Curriculum

LRN-1. Are we required to use a certain curriculum?

No. One optional point is available for aligning a program's curriculum with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) or School-Age Curricular Framework (SACF) but *neither is considered a curriculum*. This can be confusing (especially since the SACF is a "curricular" framework), so perhaps the following distinction will help:

- WMELS and SACF *define expectations* for what children should *know and be able to do*.
- On the other hand, a curriculum *describes what children need to learn* to meet these expectations and *reflects the practices* that support children's learning and development.

Additional optional points are available for demonstrating the use of individual child portfolios and for using intentional planning and tracking to improve individual child outcomes. These items can be aligned with *many* different curricula.

LRN-2. I heard that the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards training has been updated. Will I have to receive new training?

If you participated in the full 15- to 18-hour training in the past, and that training was delivered through an approved WMELS trainer, this training will continue to be recognized by YoungStar. You will therefore not have to receive new training.

LRN-3. Is the purpose of YoungStar to get children ready for the public school system?

One goal of the public school system is to socialize children into mainstream society, which requires some standardization of practice. But in their very early years, young children need consistency between in-home and out-of-home care in order to thrive. Parents need a wide range of child care choices to find one that fits well with their child's individual personality and their own values. YoungStar builds on the goal of child care licensing and certification to set quality standards but *not* to aim for standardization. It promotes research-based best practices while offering *many* alternative ways to earn points for quality.

LRN-4. What are some good resources to help my program take advantage of the outdoors?

Not surprisingly, you can find such resources right here in Wisconsin:

- Although some parents are concerned about their children being outside in cold weather, the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center in Milwaukee (<http://www.sanc.org/>) says, "There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing choices."
- The Merrimac Community Charter School in Sauk City has a wonderful garden, with students being involved in gardening *and* artwork: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Merrimac-Community-Garden/144422082250422>. (FYI: A lot of micro-grant dollars are being used by programs for gardening.)

- Pam Boulton at UW-Milwaukee (<http://www4.uwm.edu/sce/instructor.cfm?id=15385>) is a trailblazer in the field of early childhood environmental education.
- Another good person to talk with would be Carrie Morgan at the DNR (Environmental Education for Kids website: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/>).

Answers: School-Age Programs

(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)

SCH_AGE-13. How is curriculum planned and delivered in programs serving school-age children, and how does assessment occur?

Specific training has been created by the Wisconsin Afterschool Network, covering the School-Age Curricular Framework. This training covers developmentally appropriate practice and standards for serving children in school-age programs. The training also includes information about selecting curriculum as well as program and child assessment resources specifically developed for school-age children.

Information about the School-Age Curricular Framework, as well as other school-age resources, can be found at:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/resources>

<http://www.wiafterschoolnetwork.org/>

SCH_AGE-17. What does “regular attendance” in school-age programs mean?

The definition of “regular attendance” depends on the number of hours a week a program is open, as follows:

- If the program is open 40 hours per week or fewer, to be in “regular attendance” means that the child attends the program 50% or more of the hours the program is open for that child’s age group. For example, if a program is open 25 hours per week, the “child in regular attendance” would attend 12.5 hours or more per week.
- If the program is open more than 40 hours per week, to be “in regular attendance” means a child attends 20 hours per week or more. For example, if the program is open for 45 hours per week, the “child in regular attendance” definition would be 20 hours or more per week.

YoungStar recognizes that some school-age programs have different operating schedules based on the time of year, and when operating schedules change, these same rules apply. For example, if the program were to adjust its hours to being open for 40 hours per week in the summer, children considered to be in regular attendance in the summer would be those attending 20 hours or more per week.

In most cases, YoungStar quality indicators apply to the entire program and hence to all the children in the program. However, some YoungStar quality indicators may have exceptions for children who are not in regular attendance. If the quality indicator has an exception for children who are not in regular attendance, this is clearly stated.

Answers: Day Camps

(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)

CAMP-12. How is curriculum planned and delivered in day camps, and how does assessment occur?

Day camp programs use a curriculum aligned with the School-Age Curricular Framework (SACF) or the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS). This means the SACF or WMELS is implemented for the curriculum/programming for all children in all groups.

Specific training has been created by the Wisconsin Afterschool Network for the School-Age Curricular Framework. This training covers developmentally appropriate practice and standards for serving children in school-age programs and will therefore most likely be useful for day camp programs. The training also includes information about selecting curriculum as well as program and child assessment resources specifically developed for school-age children.

Information about the School-Age Curricular Framework, as well as other useful resources, can be found at:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/resources>

<http://www.wiafterschoolnetwork.org/>

CAMP-14. What does “regular attendance” in day camp programs mean?

The definition of “regular attendance” depends on the number of hours a week a program is open, as follows:

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YoungStar recognizes that some day camp programs have different operating schedules based on the time of year, and when operating schedules change, these same rules apply. For example, if the program were to adjust its hours to being open for 40 hours per week in the summer, children considered to be in regular attendance in the summer would be those attending 20 hours or more per week.

In most cases, YoungStar quality indicators apply to the entire program and hence to all the children in the program. However, some YoungStar quality indicators may have exceptions for children who are not in regular attendance. If the quality indicator has an exception for children who are not in regular attendance, this is clearly stated.

Answers about YoungStar Evaluation Criteria: Child Health & Well-Being and Educational Qualifications

(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)

Child Health and Well-Being

H&W-1. Are there any requirements for staff training in special education?

There are no requirements; however, YoungStar gives one to two optional points to programs if a percentage of staff has either The Registry Inclusion Credential or Wisconsin Pyramid Model training.

Each program's detailed point rating is available on the YoungStar search site, and families can access these details to see if those optional points have been earned. Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies can now refer parents to child care, school-age programs, and day camps appropriate for their children with special needs.

For more resources on Early Childhood Inclusion, visit
<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/eci/default.htm>

H&W-2. Are programs that are trained to serve children with physical, developmental, or social and emotional special needs eligible to receive increased points?

Programs that complete training in inclusive child care and supporting children's optimal development can receive points. Points may be earned if staff complete specialized training including the Inclusion Credential, inclusion training with documentation of competencies targeted, and/or training on the Wisconsin Pyramid Model, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Guiding Children's Behavior in School-Age Programs, or Tribes® TLC.

Note on the Wisconsin Pyramid Model and PBIS: The Wisconsin Pyramid Model is aligned with the PBIS model. Both models provide a multi-level system of support and a developmentally appropriate, evidence-based framework to promote social and emotional competence in children. Both models offer guidance for all children at the universal level with more intensive interventions for children needing targeted and individualized support. However, the Wisconsin Pyramid Model focuses on young children ages birth to 5, while PBIS is often used in public schools.

Wisconsin Pyramid Model: <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/social-emotional-competence-sefel-pyramid.php>
PBIS: <http://www.wisconsinpbisnetwork.org/>

For more resources on Early Childhood Inclusion, visit
<http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/eci/default.htm>

Educational Qualifications

EDU-5. Do qualifications for the Lead Teacher/Group Leader and the Director/Site Supervisor have to be in early childhood education?

For child care programs, the credits, credentials, and degrees identified for Lead Teachers and Directors must be related to early childhood education as determined by The Registry. For school-age programs, the credits, credentials, and degrees of Group Leaders and Site Supervisors could also be related to school-age care.

Note: YoungStar materials will mention "an Associate's Degree in a related area." For YoungStar, the **equivalent** to a "**related Associate's Degree**" is **60 credits beyond high school** with at least **30 of those credits related** to early childhood or school-age care.